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TAKE STEPS TO PRACTICE AND PROMOTE HEALTHY, SAFE SWIMMING
May 20-26 is National Healthy and Safe Swimming Week

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Pensacola, Fla. – May 20-26, 2019 marks the 15th annual observance of National Healthy and Safe Swimming Week. The Florida Department of Health in Escambia County is promoting simple steps that everyone can take to reduce their risk of swim-related illnesses and injuries.

Every year, thousands of Americans get sick with recreational water illnesses (RWIs), which are caused by germs found in places where people swim. RWIs can include ear, respiratory, eye, skin, wound, and gastrointestinal infections. The most common locations for contracting or spreading RWIs are swimming pools, water parks, water play areas, hot tubs, rivers, lakes, and open bodies of water such as bayous, bays, and the Gulf of Mexico. Swallowing even a small amount of contaminated recreational water can make you sick.

Take these simple steps to help prevent the spread of germs that cause RWIs:

- Don't swim when you have diarrhea.
- Don't swallow pool or recreational water.
- Don't swim when you have an open wound or broken skin.
- Practice good personal hygiene. Shower before entering a pool or other recreational water venue.
- Wash your hands after using the toilet or changing a diaper.
- Check diapers or take children to the restroom every 30-60 minutes and only change diapers in restrooms. Changing diapers pool-side can spread germs in and around the pool.

Florida leads the country in drowning deaths of children ages 1–4. Drowning can happen in the few minutes a person takes to answer a phone call or run inside for a towel, and can occur in even very shallow water such as a bucket or kiddie pool. Drowning risk can be reduced by using multiple layers of protection around pools, ponds, hot tubs, and other bodies of water.

Simple steps that can prevent drowning include:

- Use supervision as the primary means of drowning prevention. Someone who is capable of rescuing a swimmer should be actively watching a swimming child and should always be within arm's reach of any child who is in or near water.
- Use barriers, such as fences, gates, walls, and doors to prohibit children from entering a pool area without a supervising adult.
- Make sure kids wear U.S. Coast Guard-approved life jackets in and around natural bodies of water, such as lakes, bays, bayous, or the Gulf of Mexico, even if they know how to swim. Water wings, noodles, inner tubes or any other air-filled or foam toys are not designed to keep swimmers safe.
- Learn cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and get recertified every two years. CPR can help a child stay alive with little or no brain damage.

For information on healthy, safe swimming, visit cdc.gov/healthywater and WaterSmartFL.com.

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About the Florida Department of Health

The department, nationally accredited by the Public Health Accreditation Board, works to protect, promote and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county and community efforts.

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